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ABSTRACT

QUESTA II assesses the high school environment in terms of values, attitudes, expectations, and levels of satisfaction through students' and faculty's perceptions. This questionnaire provides information about how the students feel about themselves, and their relationships with their teachers, administrators, and classmates. Since the 1969-70 school year, QUESTA II has been administered biannually to all 11th grade students and to all faculty members in order to: (1) learn more about the students and staff and also the characteristics of the school environment; (2) discover more about how the school functions; (3) identify those factors in the affective domain which are influencing learning; and (4) identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. The paper describes how one school district has utilized QUESTA II findings to provide relevant data for both information and discussion sessions at school-community self evaluation conferences and to provide information that focuses on action needed to improve the school's environment. QUESTA II may also be used as a supplement to Pennsylvania's program of Educational Quality Assessment or to construct the needs assessment for a Title III program. The paper includes the procedures used in administering QUESTA II, the plan used to translate the results into a meaningful qualitative report, and a sample of the developed form from the April 1974 administration. (Author/BJG)

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UTILIZATION OF QUESTA II

AN AFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

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Utilization of QUESTA II, An Affective Assessment of School Environment

During the 1969-70 school year, the Mt. Lebanon School District incorporated into its standardized testing program QUESTA II. QUESTA II, a non-cognitive, affective area questionnaire, is designed to assess the human environment within the school. This instrument assesses the school environment in terms of values, attitudes, expectations, and levels of satisfaction through teachers' and students' perceptions. It also provides information about how the students feel about themselves and their relationship with their teachers, administrators and classmates. In essence the survey attempts to provide the students' and educators' perceptions of the operation level of the school by providing insight into the nature of learning and conditions affecting learning in the school setting. This questionnaire is written anonymously and usually can be completed in less than 60 minutes. It is designed for use at the high school level.

Since May 1970, QUESTA II has been administered every two years to all eleventh grade students and to every member of the high school faculty.

QUESTA II was adopted because the District's staff recognized the need for the school not only to be concerned regarding our students' development in the cognitive and psychomotor domain, but also in the affective domain. It was recognized that a need existed to identify more accurately and with greater precision those things in the affective domain which are influencing learning at the high school level. Eleventh grade students were selected because of their familiarity with the high school program. Twelfth grade students were not selected because it was thought that their interests would be focused on their approaching graduation. In addition, eleventh grade students would be able to

be appraised of the results and to be involved in any evaluation in the following year. Finally, eleventh grade students participate in the state's Educational Quality Assessment (EQA), and data from QUESTA II is considered to be a valuable complement to EQA. Administrators do not write QUESTA II because they are so few in number that their individual pattern of responses could be easily identified on the summary sheet.

The Mt. Lebanon School District believes that the community has a right to know about the environment within the school and to accomplish this objective the District sponsored in 1971 its first Self-Evaluation Conference. The purpose of this program was to provide to representatives from the total community as accurate a picture as possible of the life blood of the school. Specifically, through this self evaluation program, the District set out to:

1. share and exchange information about the school with a wide section of the school and community population.
2. learn more about students' and staffs' perceptions, expectations and satisfactions in the school.
3. learn more about school expectations of community at large.
4. learn more about the attitudinal characteristics of each school "as a community."
5. gain some insights into how each school functions.
6. assess each school's strengths and weaknesses.
7. identify possible factors which are responsible for the strengths and make certain their use is reinforced and suggest approaches to the solutions of the problems and to plan useful next steps (to make these suggested solutions a reality).

Since May 1971, these conferences have been scheduled bi-annually and in the past the findings from QUESTA II have been used as structure for the conference. In February 1975, the District has scheduled its "Third Self-Evaluation Conference." During this conference the findings from the 1974

administration of QUESTA II and the 1974 administration of the state Educational Quality Assessment will be used to provide relevant data for both the information and discussion sessions.

When the Mt. Lebanon School District went to the community and asked them to support a 13½ million dollar building program as an addition to the present high school plant, a commitment was made that the proposed educational setting would allow the creation of a program wherein it would be possible to individualize and humanize instruction for every student. To justify this expenditure a need exists to periodically evaluate the degree to which this obligation is being fulfilled. It has been found that a summary of the analysis of sections of QUESTA II have helped in the determination of whether this commitment is being fulfilled. The summary of QUESTA findings have made the District aware of strengths and weaknesses in its attempts to become more humane. QUESTA II has provided data with which to consider conditions which have demanded the school's immediate consideration.

The legislature of the State of Pennsylvania has mandated an evaluation program known as Educational Quality Assessment (EQA). This program is administered every three years in every school district in grades 5, 8, and 11. The purpose of this assessment program is to provide the local school district with objective information related to the cognitive and affective areas about the quality of their school programs. This information is to be used to appraise a school's programs and to develop plans to improve or strengthen them. Educational Quality Assessment is based upon the Ten Goals of Quality Education which identifies the extent of a student's development in three areas of the cognitive domain and in seven areas of the affective domain. The affective areas are self-esteem, understanding others, vocational attitude, appreciating human accomplishment, interest in school, citizenship, creative attitudes, and preparing for a changing world.

Acquaintanceship with the content, construct, and rationale of both Pennsylvania's Educational Quality Assessment and QUESTA II allowed members of District staff to recognize that in many instances both instruments were assessing the same areas. The staff believed that QUESTA II had the capabilities of providing more in-depth information in the identified affective areas than EQA. Therefore, it was decided that QUESTA findings would complement the findings from the state's assessment program. Last year, to accomplish this objective QUESTA II was administered to the same high school population who wrote EQA. An expert and authority on EQA has complimented the District for this pattern of testing stating that he also believed that the findings from QUESTA can be used to supplement and make more meaningful the findings of EQA. During the month of October, the High School Principal, the Director of Instructional Services, and the Coordinator of Pupil Personnel Services matched the items of QUESTA with the specific scales of EQA as defined by its program authors. This exercise confirmed that the areas tapped by QUESTA II were related to EQA. In Chart I the specific goal areas of EQA are identified and the number of items in specific sections of QUESTA that were found to relate to the specific EQA areas are listed for each EQA goal.

CHART I

AREAS OF QUESTA RELATED TO EQA GOAL AREAS

EQA GOAL I - Self Esteem

QUESTA Areas	Number of Items
General Satisfaction Level	1
Opinions About Purposes of the School	2
Effects of the School on the Student	5
Personal Values and Life Goals	9
Pressures on the Student	5
Rules and Regulations	1
	Total 23

EQA GOAL II - Understanding Others

QUESTA Areas	Number of Items
Opinions About Purposes of the School	2
Effects of the School on the Student	1
Personal Values and Life Goals	1
Personal Relations and Communications	1
Relations Between Racial, Ethnic Groups	1
Pressures on the Student	3
	Total 9

EQA GOAL IV - Interest in School

QUESTA Areas	Number of Items
General Satisfaction Level	2
Opinions About Purposes of the School	2
Effects of the School on the Student	1
Personal Relations and Communications	9
Governance of the School	10
Perceptions of Change	16
Teachers in the Classroom	17
Grading	12
The Curriculum	4
Extra Curricular, Including Athletics	8
Counseling	31
Rules and Regulations	2
	Total 114

EQA GOAL V - Citizenship

QUESTA Areas	Number of Items
Opinions About Purposes of the School	3
Effects of the School on the Student	4
Personal Values and Life Goals	3
Pressures on the Student	3
Rules and Regulations	20
	Total 33

CHART I (Continued)

AREAS OF QUESTA RELATED TO EQA GOAL AREAS

EQA GOAL VI - Health Habits

QUESTA Areas	Number of Items
Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs	11
Rules and Regulations	1
Total	12

EQA GOAL VII - Creative Attitude

QUESTA Areas	Number of Items
Opinions About Purposes of the School	1
Personal Values and Life Goals	2
The Arts	2
Total	5

EQA GOAL VIII - Vocational Attitude

QUESTA Areas	Number of Items
Opinions About Purposes of the School	2
Effects of the School on the Student	1
Pressures on the Student	1
Total	4

EQA GOAL IX - Appreciating Human Accomplishments

QUESTA Areas	Number of Items
Effects of the School on the Student	1
The Arts	5
Total	6

EQA GOAL X - Preparing for a Changing World

QUESTA Areas	Number of Items
Opinions About Purposes of the School	2
Effects of the School on the Student	2
Personal Values and Life Goals	1
Total	5

The District supplements its report of EQA findings with the appropriate knowledge and information gained from administering QUESTA II.

During the 1974-75 school year the District found another use for QUESTA II results. It was recognized that within the content of QUESTA II is a built-in needs assessment program. The District staff used the 1974 QUESTA findings to construct a rationale for a title program related to vocational counseling. Justification for the need was found in analyzing and evaluating QUESTA II data. A section of the report that was formulated appears in Charts II, III, and IV.

CHART II

1974 QUESTA FINDINGS (MT. LEBANON SCHOOL DISTRICT)

QUESTA AREA

Opinions About Purpose of School

		Response Pattern	
		Percent "yes" answers	
Question	Respondents	happening	should
- to help students prepare for jobs	students	35	72
	teachers	25	61
- to help students fulfill themselves as persons	students	20	68
	teachers	39	87
+ to help students get into college	students	78	62
	teachers	91	48
- to prepare students to cope effectively with outside world	students	20	74
	teachers	20	86

Key: + over emphasis
- under emphasis

QUESTA AREA

Effects of School on the Student

Question	Respondents	Response Pattern
helps students to know about jobs after graduation	students	79% stated school had little or no influence

QUESTA AREA

Personal Values/Life Goals

Question	Respondents	Response Pattern	
most important source of moral, and spiritual values to you	students	Parents	60%
		Peers	62%
		Self	66%
		Teachers	12%
		Counselors	7%

CHART III

1974 QUESTA FINDINGS (MT. LEBANON SCHOOL DISTRICT)

QUESTA AREA
Counseling

Question	Respondents	Response Pattern Evaluation of Counseling fairly good
Helping choose occupations	students	63%
	teachers	57%
Helping to select courses	students	80%
	teachers	72%

Question	Respondents	Response Pattern Expression of Belief
Should the school provide information, counseling, or courses in area of choosing occupation	students	89%
	teachers	90%

Question	Respondents	Response Pattern Percent of times selected	
Who would ask about finding a job after graduation	students	self knowledge	36%
		parents	20%
		counselors	12%

QUESTA AREA
Pressure on Students

Question	Respondents	Response Pattern Category Bothered very much
Concern about getting into college	students	46%
	teachers	58%
Pressure from parents	students	27%
	teachers	52%

QUESTA AREA
General Satisfaction Level

Question	Respondents	Response Pattern Category Agree	Strongly Agree
Experience in this school a good one	students	62%	19%
	teachers	33%	62%

CHART IV

CONCLUSIONS FROM 1974 QUESTA FINDINGS (MT. LEBANON SCHOOL DISTRICT)

The following conclusions were derived from the data:

1. The school has little influence in:

   helping students prepare to cope with the outside world,

   giving information about jobs after graduation.

2. The school should do more to help students:

   prepare for jobs,

   fulfill themselves as persons,

   cope with the outside world.

3. The school is doing too much to help students prepare for college.

   Most students experience pressure about getting into college.

4. Parents, peers and self knowledge rate higher than counselors and teachers as a source of values and help in finding a job. Yet, students have good communications with counselors and teachers.

5. Students expect counselors to assist them with course selections and college admissions. They expect the entire school program to help them with choice of occupation, preparation for a job and development of skills to cope with the outside world.

6. Teachers overestimate the amount of pressure students experience about the need to be admitted into college. Teachers overestimate the amount of pressure placed on students by their parents.

The District recognizes that before anyone is asked to participate in any type of assessment program there is a need to foster in the respondent the correct mental set and a constructive attitude toward the assessment program. Before administering QUESTA II the administration explained to the student body and the faculty: What is QUESTA II? Why QUESTA II? What does the school plan to do with the results? It was also mentioned at these meetings how the District planned to share the information that was learned from the program. In this meeting the procedure adopted to assure anonymity of response on the questionnaire was also explained. To accomplish this task the building principal and the psychologist met to explain this assessment program with two selected student leaders from each eleventh grade homeroom. The student leaders carried what they had learned from this meeting back to their fellow homeroom students. The house principals met with each of their respective faculties to explain the program. In the explanation meeting the students exhibited a high degree of interest in all aspects of the evaluative program. The teachers were most cooperative. It is to be noted that no problems were encountered during the administration of QUESTA II and that 100% of the teachers returned their completed questionnaire without the need of any type of coercion.

The District has always made use of the QUESTA II comment sheet, an optional unstructured supplement to the inventory. The students have always made extensive use of this sheet. The content of their comments points out that the questions of this questionnaire serve as stimuli for their remarks. The students' remarks are frank, open, very exact, and often expressed in great detail. Our students were willing to point out what was good and bad about programs, teachers, any innovations and the questionnaire. An interesting note is that those teachers who are rated unsatisfactorily by the administration

during the 1973-74 school year received a significantly greater number of negative criticisms than other members of the faculty. In September the comment sheets were reviewed by the high school administrative staff. Their criterion for determining validity was the number of instances that a particular comment was made. After reviewing the contents of the comment sheet, the high school staff remarked that the comment sheets make very interesting reading; however, sometimes depressing, they are for the most part constructive and are very enlightening and demand constructive action.

Following the administration of any assessment program, it is the policy of the School District to publish a qualitative report for distribution. Following the April 1974 administration of QUESTA II, as in the past two administrations, the summary of QUESTA II findings has been prepared. This summary was prepared through the team efforts of two high school counselors, the secondary school psychologist, and the Coordinator of Pupil Personnel Services. An example of this summary is presented in Charts V and VI.

CHART V

OPINIONS ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL

A majority of students and teachers feel that the school is not but should strongly emphasize helping students of different races get along together.

The following are purposes which the school should have that the students and teachers feel should have much stronger emphasis:

Help students prepare for jobs.[1]

Help students discover and fulfill themselves as persons.[1,2]

Help students discover and develop their creative ability.[1]

Help students be concerned for the needs of others.[1]

Help students gain understanding and respect for the rules of society.[3]

Prepare students to play an active role as citizens.[3]

Prepare students to cope effectively with the outside world.[1]

Help students become independent thinkers.[1]

The following are purposes which the school should have that students and teachers feel should have more emphasis:

Help students discover and develop their intellectual abilities.

Give students specific knowledge and skills.

A majority of the students and teachers believe that the school should try to foster the ethical growth of its students, but the teachers feel more strongly about this than the students.

The majority of students and teachers expressed general satisfaction that helping students improve their social and economic status is being properly (moderately) emphasized.

Both students and teachers, while agreeing on its importance, would like to see less emphasis on helping students to get into college, particularly prestigious colleges. This feeling was strongly expressed by teachers.

Both students and teachers agree that the need to prepare students for work they will face in college is important and is being met, but the teachers feel that there should be less emphasis.

Both students and teachers feel that there is a moderate emphasis of the need to help students develop leadership ability, but teachers see a need for much greater emphasis.

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[1] More girls than boys see a need for this emphasis.

[2] What the students and teachers understand this statement to mean should be discussed at the self-evaluation conference.

[3] More teachers than students see the need for much stronger emphasis.

CHART VI

EFFECTS OF THE SCHOOL ON THE STUDENT

The majority of the students feel that their school has positively influenced their progress in:

* Improving my sense of responsibility.
* Improving my ability to think and solve problems.
* Developing the ability to follow through with a project, interest or task.
* Understanding science, math, English, and other academic subjects.
* Increasing my desire to learn.

Improving my self-confidence.

Improving my ability to get along with other people.

Helping me to appreciate the arts.

Knowing about jobs after graduacion.

Becoming politically aware.

A majority of the students feel their progress has not been influenced in:

* Preparing for marriage and children.
* Learning to make better distinctions between right and wrong.
* Getting along well with my parents.
* Becoming independent of my parents.
* Understanding people who differ from me in racial or ethnic background.

Being independent of the opinion of other students.

* Response patterns are signficantly greater than 50%

With this summary as a guide the high school principal appointed five committees to study this report for their findings and suggestions for improvement. The committees were comprised of administrators, subject area coordinators, teachers and students. Placement on a particular committee was related to particular professional assignments or interest. Each committee reviewed particular sections of QUESTA with no committee reviewing more than three sections of QUESTA. The committees and their assignments are presented in Chart VII.

CHART VII

COMMITTEE TO STUDY QUESTA II FINDINGS

The Committee on Purposes and Goals will review the report and QUESTA data on the following sections:

Item Grouping

Purposes of the School
Effects of the School on the Students
General Satisfaction Level

The Committee on Personal Relations and Communications will review the report and QUESTA data on the following sections:

Item Grouping

Personal Relations and Communications within the school
Governance within the school
Pressures on the students
Rules and Regulations

The Committee on Curriculum and Instruction will review the report and QUESTA data on the following sections:

Item Grouping

Teachers in the Classroom
Grading
The Curriculum
Perceptions of Change

The Committee on Counseling and Pupil Concerns will review the report and QUESTA data on the following sections:

Item Grouping

Counseling
Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs
Relations between Racial, Ethnic Groups
Personal Values and Life Goals

The Committee on Extra-Curricular Activities will review the report and QUESTA data on the following sections:

Item Grouping

The Arts
Extra-curricular Activities, including Athletics

After studying the data they will be charged to:

1. evaluate the draft
2. make necessary elaborations
3. formulate recommendations for their committee reports

The five committee reports combined with the original committee report will serve as the final assessment report to the staff and the community.

Some of the more significant findings from the Mt. Lebanon administration of QUESTA II follow:

1. 81% of the students agreed that in general their own experience in the school had been a good one.
2. When questioned about the purposes of the school, students felt stronger emphasis should be placed upon preparing students for jobs and helping students cope effectively with the outside world.
3. Significantly more of the students believed that the school has positively influenced their progress in the ability to think and reason than it had provided knowledge about jobs after graduation.
4. From the listing of 13 personal values and life goals our student response pattern revealed that they ranked personal happiness most essential and being active in politics as least essential.
5. Our students listed their own thinking, student friends, and parents as the primary source of their moral, spiritual, and ethical values.
6. More than 75% of the students agreed that students have enough freedom to choose the courses they want; that the school offers a good range and variety of courses; that the courses develop the ability to analyze and criticize written and visual materials; and that most courses offer useful knowledge or develop useful skills.
7. Although 80% of our students agree that the school offers enough opportunity for participation in the arts, active participation is less than 10% in every area except creative writing.
8. A majority of the students felt that hard work, actual knowledge of subject matter, intelligence, and talking a lot in discussion are very important in getting good grades.

9. 85% of the students and faculty believe that the school board and administration have the greatest influence in how the school is run.

10. 90% of the students and faculty agree that students should have a voice in determining curriculum, and 60% of the students believe that they have reasonable opportunities to influence change in the school.

11. 71% of the teachers felt that the relationship between teachers and administrators is good. (A significantly greater percentage than was found in the two previous administrations).

The Mt. Lebanon School District does not believe that QUESTA II is a panacea to solve all of our problems. It is recognized that it offers no foolproof formulas for improvement. It does offer the school an unparalleled vantage point for looking at itself - an information base which is really only the starting point for self-analyses. The information base is formulated by providing the faculty and students the opportunity to honestly express their feelings, opinions, concerns, and insights. QUESTA II has not performed miracles, but in the company of other measures and observations, a profile has been drawn of the high school. The insights provided by the objective information in the school report, combined with the intimate knowledge of the school which the staff, student, and the community possess have served as a guide in formulating recommendations which are bringing the goals and objectives of the educational program closer to reality.

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